

ORM NEWS

Office of Resolution Management
Department of Veterans Affairs

www.va.gov/orm



**"Honoring and Serving our Nation's Veterans by Promoting
Discrimination-free Environments"**

August 2005

From the Deputy Assistant Secretary



Resolution Management Strategic Planning

Since becoming the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration (HR&A), Mr. R. Allen Pittman has initiated a process to review the organizations that comprise HR&A. As part of this process a "One VA Resolution Management Strategic Planning" session has been planned for August 10-11, 2005, in Washington, DC. Participating in this planning session will be VA, HR&A and ORM management officials and our stake holders' council. The objectives of this planning session are to:

- Develop both near-term and long-term strategies and initiatives to change the organizational culture regarding the resolution of workplace conflict;
- Improve the delivery of EEO counseling, employee/manager mediation (including ADR), complaint in-take, and the complaint investigation and adjudication process throughout the Department.
- Discuss potential organizational changes that may be implemented to improve the quality of service in each of the aforementioned functions, as well as potential realignment of other roles and functions;
- Discuss strategies and initiatives to increase customer satisfaction and;
- Identify meaningful performance measures that will allow us to assess progress and results.

The results of the session will be integrated into a comprehensive ORM Strategic Plan that will serve as a blue print for future changes in how ORM provides first-class resolution management services, and

In this issue...

- 1 Resolution Management Strategic Planning
- 2 Internal EEO Complaints
- 3 Great Job Done Employee Recognition Program
- 4 Great Lakes Operations Regional Conference
- 6 EEOC Reorganization
- 7 Office Notes
- 9 TSP Lifecycle (L) Funds
- 10 Emergency Preparedness Guidance and Information
- 11 General Office Safety
- 12 Physical Activity in Your Daily Life

satisfies the needs of the Department. As you know, ORM has made many improvements in how it delivers EEO complaint processing and our other services since its creation in 1998. This strategic planning session is another step in the evolution of our organization. The results of the session will be shared with you as they become available.

James S. Jones ■

Internal EEO Complaints

A memorandum, dated July 20, 2005, on ORM's internal EEO complaint process was sent electronically to all ORM employees. The following is an excerpt from that memorandum and is provided to ensure all employees are aware of this program.

If you believe you have been discriminated against and wish to contact an EEO counselor, please call Mr. LaMont Johnson, ORM's EEO Program Manager, at (202) 501-2925. ORM has obtained the services of contractors to perform counseling, procedural reviews, and investigations for complaints filed by ORM employees. Mr. Johnson will make the necessary arrangements for the initial contact to be referred to a contractor who will conduct the counseling. It is our goal for a counselor to call you back within 48 hours. If counseling is not successful, and you wish to file a formal complaint, send it to Mr. Johnson at the following address:

Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Resolution Management (08)
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420
Fax (202) 501-2811

Employees are encouraged to work with supervisors to resolve disputes by working on solutions together. In his role as Ombudsman, Mr. Johnson can also facilitate communication and resolution between an employee and supervisor. Mediation is another tool that can be used to resolve complaints. If you are interested in mediation, please contact Mr. Johnson. ■

Great Job Done

Employee Recognition Program

ORM field employees who received both high response rates and high overall satisfaction ratings on surveys from their customers for the services they provided are recognized in the Great Job Done Recognition Program. As with last quarter's recipients, employees who received at least a 37% response rate with overall ratings of 85% or higher are recognized as "Go the Extra Smile" recipients. Employees with 25% response rates and overall ratings of 80% or higher are recognized as "You Make the Difference" recipients.

The following employees are recognized for their efforts for the third quarter of FY05:

"Go the Extra Smile"

37% or higher response rate with a customer satisfaction rate of 85% or higher

Office	ORM Employee	Response Rate	Satisfaction Rate
MSO	Carselia Renard	100%	100%
MSO	George Garrett	50%	100%
GLO	Maurice Holman	50%	100%
NEO	Wardelle McClendon	43%	100%

"You Make the Difference"

25% or higher response rate with a customer satisfaction rate of 80% or higher

Office	ORM Employee	Response Rate	Satisfaction Rate
MAO	Patricia Riley	63%	80%
MSO	Lauri Williams	36%	100%
GLO	Alice Miller	33%	100%
WO	Jean Zurface	33%	100%
SEO	Randall Mitchell	32%	86%
GLO	Lydia Ward-Nash	29%	100%
NEO	Roxanne Zygmund	29%	100%
SEO	Kelley Schafer	27%	100%
NEO	Rachael Burkhart	27%	86%
MSO	Michael R Fulton	25%	100%
CPO	Pamela M. Grosdidier	25%	100%
NEO	Laura Williams	25%	100%

We want to remind all employees to encourage their customers to complete and return the customer satisfaction surveys upon receipt. These surveys are designed to gather data and feedback on the services we provide. The Customer Service Division noted a 5.2% increase in response rates from Second Quarter to Third Quarter of FY 2005. Keep up the good work! For more information, contact the Customer Service Division. ■

Great Lakes Regional Conference

Chicago, the “Windy City,” was the location for Great Lakes Operations’ Regional EEO Conference that was held July 26 – July 28, 2005. The theme of the conference was “We can make a Difference in Resolving Workplace Disputes.” The conference was attended by 100 participants.



Hosted by Tywanne Halstead, Regional EEO Manager (shown addressing the conference), and her staff; this event featured a number of notable guest speakers that included: Renee Oshinski, Acting Network Director, VISN 12; Jack Hetrick, Director, Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital; and Charetta Harrington, Chief Administrative Judge, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The keynote speaker was Patricia Russell-McCloud, J.D., Founder and President of Russell-McCloud & Associates who spoke about the benefits of mediation in diverse workplace environments.



Other guest speakers included Deborah McCallum, Acting Assistant General Counsel, Office of General Counsel, Ava Ganem Vasquez with the Office of Employment and Discrimination Complaint Adjudication (OEDCA), and Richard Walters, Administrative Judge with the Veterans Affairs Board of Contract Appeals.

Conference presentations included breakout sessions, panels, and an open forum with EEOC judges. Topics discussed included:

- ORM: Improving Environments to Better Serve Our Nations Veterans
- Resolving EEO Complaints Through Mediation
- How Do We Overcome the Obstacles to Mediating EEO Complaints?
- ADR, A Bridge to Resolution
- Mediating Workplace Disputes in the 21st Century
- Senior Managers and the Union
- OEDCA Briefings
- EEOC ADR Programs in the Hearing Units

ORM employees made presentations and served in a number of other roles. Moderators for the conference were Tami Press, Denene Burnette, Davidemir Ruple, and Allen Mitichell III. Rosa Franco, COO discussed “Resolving EEO Complaints through Mediation”; Carolyn Wakefield – “What are “C” Investigations.” John Jones did a demonstration of Alternative Dispute Resolution Demonstration. Brenda Lewis presented “Working Together to Resolve Workplace Disputes”, while Charolette Jones did an overview of the Organizational Climate Assessment Program. Lillette Turner discussed “Do’s and Don’ts of Settlement Agreements” and “Root Cause – What is It and What Can We Learn from It.” Dale Leftridge presented “An Overview of the Web-Based Tracking System” and MaryEllen Garcia did the breakout discussion wrap up.

Conference attendees had this to say about ORM:

- “ORM has come a long way and continues to provide quality service.”
- “ORM is accommodating and resourceful.”
- “ORM is helpful when discussing employee issues.”
- “ORM employees are friendly and helpful.”

Special thanks to Ms. Halstead and the employees of Great Lakes Operations for their efforts to provide an informative and well attended conference. Ms. Halstead and event committee members: Renita Clay-Williams, Colette Hill, Ida O’Neal, and Ethel Bodiford are shown in this photo. Committee members



not shown are Denene Burnette, Allen Mitchell, and Gloria Smith. This was the first Great Lakes Operations regional conference held in Chicago. ■

EEOC Reorganization

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) approved a reorganization of its district offices on July 8, 2005. Current information available on EEOC's Web site describes this reorganization as follows:

- This is an internal realignment and will not affect the way the public does business with the agency. The public may continue to call, visit and write to EEOC offices as they always have. Charging parties may continue to file charges in any convenient EEOC office.
- According to the EEOC, there will be no layoffs of employees, no offices will close, and two new offices will be opened. This reorganization advances the President's expectations of every executive-branch agency, which is to run a well managed, highly efficient, customer-centered, and results-driven organization.
- The jurisdictional areas of district offices will expand, which will take from 23 to 15 the number of offices headed by district directors and regional attorneys. The Commission is expanding its number of field offices, from one (1) to nine (9), and will also have 15 area offices and 14 local offices, including two local offices that will be established to respond to the growing population of workers in Mobile, Alabama, and Las Vegas, Nevada.
- There will be a reduction in the number of managers and administrators, with an increase in front-line staff conducting investigations, mediations and litigation, and providing outreach educational services to the community - delivering a more streamlined and efficient structure with better, faster service and more public access.

In a published comment, EEOC Deputy General Counsel James Lee is quoted as saying, "This plan will not reduce the level of service that the public is receiving." ■

Office Notes

HR&A Employee Awards Ceremony

R. Allen Pittman, Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration (HR&A), held an employee awards ceremony at VA Central Office on August 3, 2005, to recognize employees of the organizations that make up HR&A (Human Resources and Administration, Human Resources and Labor Management, Office of Administration, Diversity Management & EEO, and the Office of Resolution Management). Presentations included: Senior Executive Service Awards, Federal Service Awards, Special Contribution Awards, and an Unsung Hero Award recognizing an employee who has served on active duty in support of our nation's efforts in the Middle East. Mr. James S. Jones, DAS for ORM, and the other senior executives in HR&A where each presented a Senior Executive Service flag in recognition of their selection to the senior executive service in the Federal government.

Farewell to Austin Lewis

The following message was recently sent to all ORM employees.

Effective August 21, 2005, [Austin Lewis](#), Regional EEO Officer for Mid-South Operations is leaving ORM. Mr. Lewis was one of the first managers selected and has been with ORM since its inception. The contributions made by Mr. Lewis over the past 8 years are appreciated and he will be missed. On behalf of the DAS and COO for ORM, please join me in congratulating and wishing Mr. Lewis great success in his future endeavors, signed Waltrunette Gardner, Human Resources Manager. Employees of the Little Rock Field Office have planned a roast and toast for Austin on August 18, 2005, in Little Rock.

In addition to the event for Austin, Mid-South Operations employees are also holding a luncheon to congratulate [Pamela Johnson](#) for her selection as the National Team Leader for counselors. For more information, contact Kathy Howse with the Little Rock Office.

Western Operations

Western Operations is proud to announce that three counselors, [Ronald McCullough](#), [Carolyn Patterson](#) and [Barbara Walter](#), were selected for promotion to investigator effective July 24, 2005. Congratulations!

Learning Resources

Lewis Henson, Director, Learning Resources, asked that we share a letter of appreciation for **Karen Civitate** from Tom Reid, Chairman, Federal Executive Board of Greater Los Angeles, CA. Karen was recognized for her assistance with the Shared Mediator Team (SMART) Program. Mr. Reid said "Please convey our sincere appreciation for her assistance with the SMART Program. We commend Ms. Civitate for her professionalism, expertise, and a job well done." Mr. Reid goes on to say "Karen has been a part of the Greater Los Angeles Federal Executive Board Alternative Dispute Resolution Program for several years. She has provided program development, classroom instruction, mediation services and alternative dispute resolution consultation to the Greater Los Angeles Federal Executive Board for several years."

Mediation

ORM has a pool of certified mediators to assist VA organizations. The following Mid-South and Mid-Atlantic Operations employees recently completed mediations that resulted in settlement agreements:

Billy Cantrell
David Woodly
William Suddeth

Anthony Metcalf
Deborah Grigsby
Lauri Williams

Providing the highest quality mediation services available to VA employees is just one of the many services ORM employees provide to the Department.

No FEAR Act Training Reminder

All VA employees are required to complete "No FEAR Act" training by **September 1, 2005**. Please ensure you complete this training by that deadline.

An email was sent to all ORM employees, from Rosa Franco, COO, on August 3, 2005, advising employees of this requirement. It included instructions on how to log on to the training module at <http://vaww1.va.gov/posh/>. Each employee must complete a test at the end of the training module to obtain your certificate of training. Once you have received a grade of 70% or higher, you will receive a certificate of completion displayed with your test results. Print a copy of your certificate of completion, scan it, and attach it to an email addressed to Paul Crain at Paul.Crain@va.gov. ■

Did You Know?

THRIFT SAVINGS PLAN

LIFECYCLE (L) FUNDS

The Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board announced July 18th that TSP Lifecycle Funds will be made available to employees beginning August 1, 2005.

What are Lifecycle (L) Funds?

Lifecycle (L) Funds are asset allocation portfolios with investment mixes tailored to your target date for withdrawing your funds (after you leave Federal service). As your withdrawal date approaches, the L Fund's investment mix automatically becomes more conservative (i.e., less risky). If you contribute to lifecycle funds, you don't need to reallocate your account assets as you approach retirement - the L Funds will do this for you.



Where can I get more information?

Check out the TSP website at www.tsp.gov. The website includes the July edition of the newsletter *TSP Highlights*, with a feature story entitled “L Funds Offer a New Approach,” and the L Funds Information Sheet that provides more technical details about the funds.

What are my TSP fund choices now?

You'll still be able to contribute to the Government Securities (G) Fund, the Common Stock Index Investment (C) Fund, the Small Capitalization Index Investment (S) Fund, the International Stock Index Investment (I) Fund, and the Fixed Income Index Investment (F) Fund. The new Lifecycle (L) Funds are a combination of these five funds.

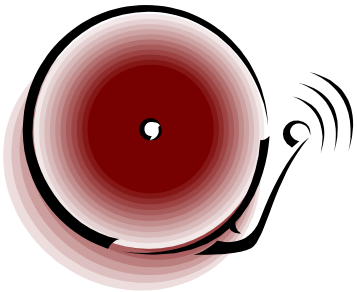
How do I allocate my TSP contributions to the new L Funds?

Starting August 1, 2005, use the Thrift Savings Plan website www.tsp.gov to change your fund allocations to include the new Lifecycle (L) Funds.

You may also use this website to change other fund allocations at any time. If you don't remember your PIN, you can request a new number online. The website includes detailed information about each of the available funds.

Note: You may start, stop or change the amount of your TSP contributions at any time using Employee Express at www.employeeexpress.gov. If you don't remember your PIN, you can request a new number online. ■

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION



For guidance and information on federal government employee response during a crisis or emergency, check the OPM Emergency Guidance Web site at <http://www.opm.gov/emergency/>. You will find brochures of guidance and instruction on dealing with emergency crisis situations for federal managers, employees and their families. Employees and managers should also familiarize themselves with local emergency procedures.

The Department of Homeland Security offers comprehensive emergency guidance at <http://www.ready.gov/> which includes information on making emergency preparedness kits, developing family plans and information about surviving specific types of disaster.

Here are the primary emergency situations you should be familiar with:

- Shelter-in-place means to stay indoors. If shelter-in-place is recommended, move to a designated shelter-in-place location. Local officials will provide instructions on necessary actions.
- Evacuation means to leave the area of actual or potential hazard. If an evacuation is ordered, follow the instructions of local officials regarding evacuation routes and the locations of shelters. ■

General Office Safety

A large percentage of workplace accidents and injuries occur in offices. Like the shop or laboratory, the office requires preventive measures to ensure a safe and healthful environment. Common causes of office accidents include the following:

- Slipping, tripping, and falling hazards
- Burning, cutting, and pinching hazards
- Improper lifting and handling techniques
- Failure to remain attentive
- Improper office layout and arrangement
- Dangerous electrical wiring
- Exposure to toxic substances
- Horseplay

Good Housekeeping Practices

Many office accidents are caused by insufficient housekeeping practices. By keeping the office floor both neat and clean, you can eliminate most slipping, tripping, and falling hazards. Other good housekeeping practices include the following:

- Ensure that office lighting is adequate. Replace burned out light bulbs and have additional lighting installed, as necessary.
- Ensure that electrical cords and phone cords do not cross walkways or otherwise pose a tripping hazard. If you cannot move a cord, have a new outlet installed or secure the cord to the floor with cord covering strips. Do not run cords underneath carpet, and avoid the use of tape whenever possible.
- Report or repair tripping hazards such as defective tiles, boards, or carpet immediately.
- Clean spills and pick up fallen debris immediately. Even simple items such as a loose pencil could cause a serious falling injury.
- Keep office equipment, facilities, and machines in good condition.
- Store items in an approved storage space. Do not store heavy equipment or sharp objects on overhead shelves. Take care to not stack boxes too high or too tight. Clearly label boxes with their contents.
- Keep all drawers and cupboard doors closed when unattended. ■

Physical Activity in Your Daily Life

At the Office

Most of us have sedentary jobs. Work takes up a significant part of the day. What can you do to increase your physical activity during the work day?

- Brainstorm project ideas with a co-worker while taking a walk.
- Stand while talking on the telephone.
- Walk down the hall to speak with someone rather than using the telephone.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Or get off a few floors early and take the stairs the rest of the way.
- Walk while waiting for the plane at the airport.
- Stay at hotels with fitness centers or swimming pools and use them while on business trips.
- Take along a jump rope in your suitcase when you travel. Jump and do calisthenics in your hotel room.
- Participate in or start a recreation league at your company.
- Form a sports team to raise money for charity events.
- Join a fitness center or Y near your job. Work out before or after work to avoid rush-hour traffic, or drop by for a noon workout.
- Schedule exercise time on your business calendar and treat it as any other important appointment.
- Get off the bus a few blocks early and walk the rest of the way to work or home.
- Walk around your building for a break during the work day or during lunch.



Source is the American Heart Association

ORM NEWS is a monthly publication of the Office of Resolution Management.
Contact Terry Washington, External Affairs Program, by
e-mail or by calling (202) 501-2800 concerning the content of this newsletter.
Back copies of this newsletter can be found on our Web site www.va.gov/orm